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Pilgrimage Experience and Consumption of Travel to the City of Makkah for Hajj Ritual

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In modern society which, by definition is increasingly secular and culturally motivated, the Hajj is considered the culmination of each Muslim's religious duty and aspiration. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an, that every physically and financially able Muslim should make the Hajj to the Holy City of Makkah once in his or her lifetime.

This paper explores what people do during their pilgrimage, providing a brief description of the principle rites and experiences and their meaning to an individual participants travelling from the USA. The paper will draw upon previously published literature as well as an analysis of findings from a quantitative study in which steps within the pilgrimage process were explored.

These findings include participants' descriptions of the significance and value of the experience which individual pilgrims face during travel to the holy city of Makkah. The results from the quantitative study indicated that the main motivations to attend the annual pilgrimage of Hajj were to fulfil religious obligation, spiritual enhancement and to follow teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad.

Key words: Hajj, worship, experience, pilgrimage

Introduction

The Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam: At least once in a lifetime, any Muslim who is able financially and physically to complete this journey must do so. Hajj takes place during the first days of the lunar month of Dhul-Hajjah, the 12th month of the Islamic year, and lasts for five days. Muslims from every part of the world assemble in Saudi Arabia to perform this unique form of worship. Leading authors (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Smith, 1992; Raj, 2007) note how pilgrimage routes and experiences are increasingly becoming secularised, with their explicit promotion for tourism, leisure and cultural engagement. Despite this, in today's secular world the relationship between an individual and their belief can still play a major part in influencing an individual to visit religious sites. The visitation patterns depends on internal factors such as the individual's strength of religious belief. In the current literature, very limited research is available that explores the motivation and visitation patterns of individuals who are travelling mainly for religious purposes. The literature which is available does suggest

that religion is a fundamental part of our life and culture in various different ways in the modern world (Hinnells, 1984; Raj, 2007; Raj, 2011; Usmani, 2001; Wolfe, 2000).

The Hajj is an obligatory once in a lifetime experience for those Muslims who can afford it, provided there is safety and security for travel and it leaves provision behind for dependent family, while away from home performing the Hajj. The Hajj constitutes a form of worship with the whole of the Muslim's being: with their body, mind and soul, with their time, possessions and the temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts and conveniences which a person normally enjoys. The person should assume for few days the condition of a pilgrim entirely at God's service and disposal.

This paper will explore what people do during their pilgrimage, what the Hajj is actually like for an individual participant travelling from the USA. The paper will provide a brief description of the principle rites and experiences of Hajj and their meaning to an individual. Finally, the paper will present the findings

of primary research which was undertaken to analyse the experience of individual pilgrims during their travel to the holy city of Makkah.

Islam and its Acknowledgement by the Event Industry

People have traditionally accepted the celebration of special religious holy days, for example, in the Western world, Christmas and Easter are important. In addition, people participate in other festivities organised by their rulers. Kings and leaders for example, have often organised events as a way of controlling the public.

The Islamic religion represents about 22% of the world population, having approximately 1.5 billion adherents. Islam, therefore, is the second largest religion (Christianity is the most prominent with an estimated 2.1 billion followers) (Adherents, 2007), its adherents being called Muslims. They believe in their holy book the 'Qur'an' dictated by 'Allah' their God, through the Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Collinson, Miller, 1985; Brown 1986). Resulting from these beliefs, there are a number of religious festivals in the Islamic world which are celebrated annually. The main one, the holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Because the lunar calendar is shorter than the solar calendar, Islamic holidays are on a different date each year. In 2015, Ramadan begins at sundown on June 18th. Muslims celebrate two other annual holidays, 'Eid ul-Fitr' and 'Eid ul-Adha'. The end of Ramadan is celebrated as the Eid ul-Fitr, whereas Eid ul-Adha is celebrated when the 'Hajj' (pilgrimage) ends (Zaheer, 2007). These festivals are holy for Muslims and should be kept in mind when scheduling a major event involving adherents of the faith.

In relation to Islam, the event industry has to take cognisance of this established fact, particularly considering that the Islamic population is growing (Barrett and Johnson, 2002). This matter has implications not only for worship related time schedules but also food and drink which have to match to religious beliefs, behaviour and exposure to culture. While this advice relates in particular to the annual celebration of Ramadan, it also has implications for the other Islamic traditions.

Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj)

The largest Islamic event in the world in terms of actual attendance is the Hajj in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. This annual event is a pilgrimage, which is sacred to the Muslim faith; it is the fifth and final pillar of Islam and is undertaken by approximately 3.4 million people each year (as verified by the Saudi Arabia Information Resource, www.saudinf.com, the Saudi Ministry of Culture & Information website and the Official News Agency of Saudi Arabia). This figure not only includes

millions of 'religious tourists' who fly in from all over the world, but also large numbers who converge upon Makkah from within Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries.

Leading authors such as Nolan and Nolan (1992) and Lefevre (1980) reflect on and question what Muslims do during their pilgrimage. Coming for Hajj from all parts of the globe (the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Australia etc.), as the pilgrims reach Makkah, they enter into a state of consecration known as Ihram. One takes on Ihram by expressing his or her intention to enter into that state, and putting on the pilgrim's dress (which is also called Ihram). The dress for male pilgrims is a garment unique to Hajj, which consists of two pieces of white, un-sewn cloth which cover the lower and upper parts of the body. Although no specific garment is prescribed for women, they also enter into Ihram wearing plain garments. The most important places to visit during the Hajj are Makkah where the first shrine was built and the Ka'aba stands, and Mina.

The Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah takes place during the 12th month of the Muslim calendar Dhul-Hijjah. It is the last of the five pillars of Islam, mentioned in the Qur'an. As outlined by Raj (2007), pilgrims perform different duties during the six days of Hajj. An important element for the acceptance of the Hajj by God is to take part in the assembly at Arafat, which is known as the 'Wuqoof of Arafat' - the stay in Arafat. Pilgrims stay at the plain of Arafat and then travel to Muzdalifah in order to collect pebbles - which should number forty-nine. These pebbles are important in order to stone the three pillars in Madinah. Stoning the pillars allows one to withstand evil and instead, to do Allah's will. On the last three days of the Hajj, pilgrims perform another ritual, the sacrifice of an animal in Mina. This ritual takes place in memory of the Prophet Abraham who should have sacrificed his son Ishmael.

Raj (2003) mention that the final part of Hajj is held in Makkah. The pilgrims circle around the Ka'aba praying. This ritual is known as 'tawaf' and symbolises the unity of believers, God and humans. Pilgrims circle around the Ka'aba seven times in counter clockwise rotation.

The Ka'aba

When pilgrims first arrive at Makka, after they have found accommodation and taken care of physical necessities, their first obligation is to visit the Ka'aba and perform certain prescribed acts of worship following the example of the prophet Mohammed (peace be on him). The Ka'aba is an oblong stone building located approximately in the centre of the quadrangle of the Grand Mosque in the Holy City of Makkah. The front and back walls are 40 feet in

length; the sidewalls are 35 feet long; the height of the walls is 50 feet. The story of the building of the Ka'aba is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

And remember Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of (sacred) House, (saying): 'Our Lord, accept it from us, for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Our Lord, make us those who submit to thee and of our descendants a people who submit to thee. And show us our rites, and forgive us. Indeed, thou art the forgiving, the mercy-giving. (Chapter 2: verses 127-128)

Set in a silver surround in the east corner of the Ka'aba, some four feet above ground level, is the Black Stone. This sacred Stone, the focal point of the Hajj, is the only remnant of the shrine, which Abraham built when it was given to him by the angel Gabriel. The Stone (which may be of meteoric origin) is believed to date still further back, to the time of the first person, Adam.

The Ritual of Hajj

The Hajj is considered to be the culmination of each Muslim's religious duties and aspirations. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an, that every physically and financially able Muslim should make the Hajj to the Holy City of Makkah once in his or her lifetime.

And (remember) when we prepared for Abraham the site of the (sacred) House, (saying): 'Do not ascribe anything as associate with me, and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it and those who stand and those who bow and those prostrate themselves (there). (Quran; Chapter 22: verse - 26)

And proclaim the Hajj to men; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every camel, lean on account of Journeys through deep and distant mountain highways. (Quran; Chapter 22: verse - 27)

Abu Hurairah reports that Mohammed (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Whoever performs Hajj for the sake of pleasing Allah and therein utters no word of evil, nor commits any evil deed, he returns from it as free from sin as the day on which his mother gave birth to him. (Hadith)

In the above Hadith (Hadith can be defined as 'a saying of Prophet Mohammed', peace be upon him) three things are mentioned. In the first place we read that Hajj should be for God's sake, and that there should be no worldly object and no ulterior motive prompting this holy deed, neither should it be for the show of things, nor personal fame. In another Hadith Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) once said:

Near the time Judgement day the rich ones from amongst my people will perform Hajj for the sake of travel and holidays. The middle class will perform Hajj for commercial purposes, thereby transporting goods from here to there while bringing commercial goods from there to here. The scholars will perform Hajj for the sake of show and fame. The poor will perform Hajj for the purpose of begging. (Hadith)

In another Hadith it is mentioned:

Perform Hajj and become rich, travel and become healthy.

In other words, various motives encourage one to perform Hajj, the change of air, places and weather, often bring about better health. This has been the personal experience of many who have travelled to undertake the Hajj. In another Hadith it is stated that:

Continuous Hajj and Umrah keeps away poverty and sin in the same way that fire removes rust from iron.

Islamic teachings state that pilgrims need to have a clear understanding of the following obligations when undertaking the Hajj:

1. Hajj is obligatory on every adult Muslim who can afford to go to Makkah during the Hajj season, whether on foot or by any other carriage.
2. Hajj is obligatory on a person even though they are unable to travel to the city of Madinah, the resting place of Muhammad.
3. A Muslim woman cannot travel for Hajj unless she is accompanied by a mahram (i.e. husband or relative of a prescribed degree like son, father, brother etc.) If she does not find a mahram to accompany her, Hajj is not obligatory on her until she finds one. However, she must make a will that in case she dies before performing Hajj, her heirs should arrange for her Hajj-e-badal (a proxy Hajj undertaken on behalf of another who is unable to travel) out of her left over property.
4. Hajj is obligated only once in one's life. After performing the obligatory Hajj; one is not required to perform it again. However, one can perform the nafl (optional Hajj as many times as he or she wishes.)

The Hajj of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him)

In 632CE (CE meaning 'common era' equates with AD) Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) returned to Makkah from exile in Medina. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) started the journey from Medina toward Makkah with thousands of his

followers and took over Makkah with little resistance. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) visited the Ka'aba where he destroyed idols and restored the principal of Hajj rites to their original purity and devotion to one God alone.

In the same year, the Prophet (peace be upon him) with 124,000 followers made the Hajj. This was the farewell Hajj for Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). In the same year, He delivered his last sermon to his followers on Mount Arafat. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that it is essential for pilgrims to be present at Arafat, and those who are present at Arafat have performed the Hajj. In addition He stated that even if a pilgrim arrived too late to perform the initial rites at the Grand mosque in Makkah, as long as he or she had taken part in the assembly at Arafat, the Hajj would be accepted by God.

Undertaking the Hajj

There are a number of essential Acts which must be avoided once a pilgrim enters into the state of Ihram and makes the intention (Niyah). He or she must avoid the following acts:

- making marriage proposals or marriage contracts,
- cutting hair,
- clipping nails,
- putting perfumes on their body after putting on the Ihram,
- killing or hunting animals,
- sexual intercourse,
- shaving any parts of the body,
- men must not wear any underwear or cover their heads or get in disputes.

The sole purpose of these prohibitions is to focus the individual's mind and body on the Hajj.

Intention (Niyah)

Once the pilgrim has made the intention to perform Umrah or Hajj, they need to say:

Labbayk Allahumma Umrah.

Oh Allah here I am performing Umrah.

Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan.

Oh Allah here I am performing Hajj.

After making the intention pilgrims should start saying the Talbiya:

Labbayk Allahumma labbayk. Labbayka laa shareeka laka labbayk.

Innal-hamda wan-ni'mata laka wal mulk. Laa shareeka lak.

Here I am O Allah, Here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am.

Surely all praise, grace and dominion are Yours, and You have no partner.

Men should recite the Talbiya loudly once they are in the state of Ihram. They should keep saying the Talbiya as often as possible during the whole journey. A woman should only raise her voice to the extent that only the person next to her can hear:

The Pilgrimage Route

To perform Hajj the pilgrims have to go through a number of stages during the six days (Figure 1 illustrates the pilgrimage route for the period of Hajj). The climax of the Hajj occurs between the ninth day of the Dhul-Hajjah and the thirteen-day of the Dhul-Hajjah in the 12th month of the Islamic year. The pilgrims perform the following duties during the six days of the Dhul-Hajjah:

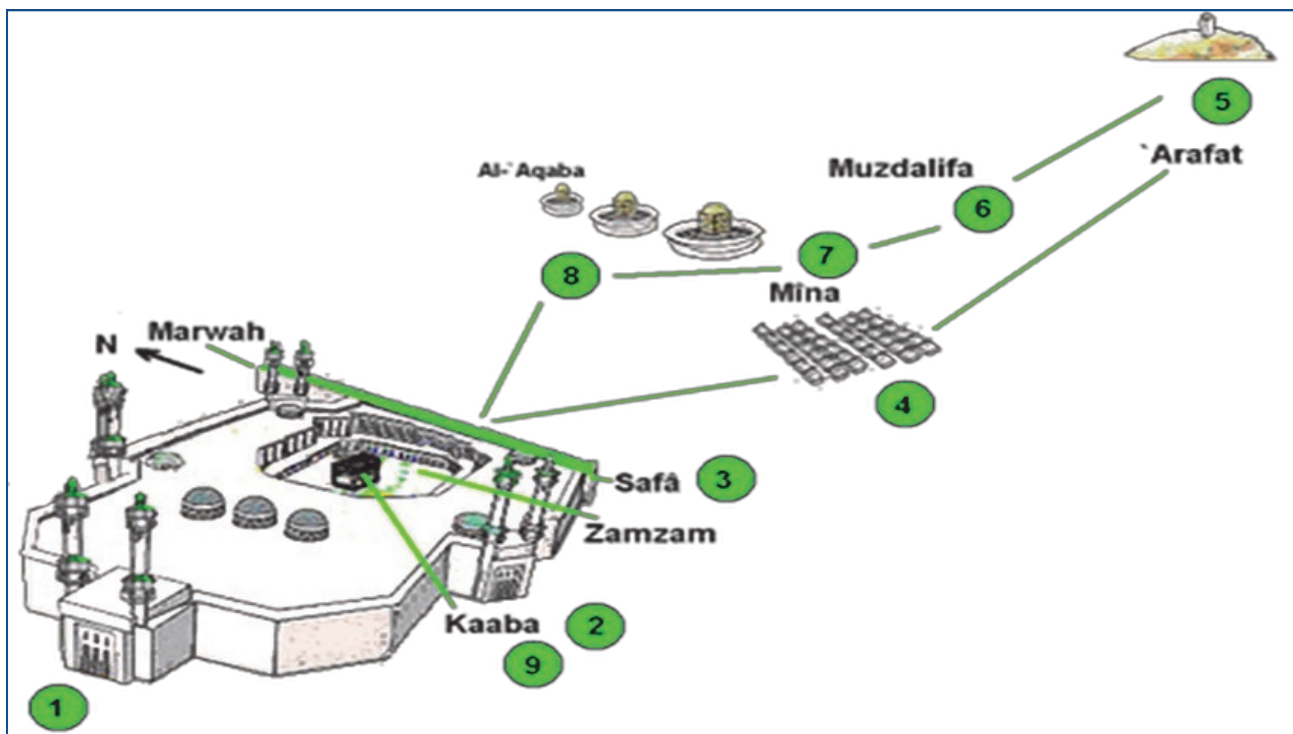
- On the **first day of the Hajj**, (the 8th of Dul-Hajjah) pilgrims sweep out of Makkah towards Mina, a small uninhabited village east of the city.
- During the **second day**, (the 9th of Dul-Hajjah), pilgrims leave Mina for the plain of 'Arafat for the wuquf 'the standing', the central rite of the Hajj.
- The stoning marks the **third day** of hajj, pilgrims leave Muzdalifah after sunrise towards Ramy al-Jamarat: The symbolic stoning of the devil.
- For the **fourth, fifth and sixth day of hajj, pilgrims** stay in Mina. After Dhuhr each day, they stone the three Jamarat's, starting with the small Jamarat and finishing with the large Jamarat.

As can be seen, the festival of Hajj does not take place in a single area or city, it is spread over a number of towns and cities in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrims start their journey from Makkah on to Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat (approximately nine miles from Makkah) and vice versa over the six day period.

Methodology

Much of the primary research undertaken to date on the Hajj is highly qualitative and descriptive in nature. Because of this, it was decided to undertake research utilising a quantitative approach, in order to study and analyse the experience which individual pilgrims face during their travel to the holy city of Makkah. The study was conducted in 3 Southern Californian Mosques - Victorville, Claremont & Riverside, which are located within 50 miles of each other, using Muslim Student Association (MSA) volunteers to administer surveys after Friday prayers. Before conducting the survey outside the mosques, the researchers asked permission from the Imams and

Figure 1. The Hajj Pilgrims Route



Source: Hajj-pilgrims-path (2011)

committee members through a phone call and follow-up personal visits. The survey was conducted on a random basis, during Friday prayer with a view to including as many people of different ages and background as possible. Questionnaire administration was done for period of two weeks and a total of 250 valid responses were collected. These approaches (multiple sites, various days of survey and an established survey tool) were combined as suggested by Finn, Elliott-White and Walton (2000), in order to maximise the validity of the research. The research purpose and importance of respondent participation was explained prior to all interviews, to acquire 'informed consent'. This also served to persuade the participants of the value and credibility of the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). Appropriate assurances were made regarding confidentiality and anonymity as recommended by Bell (1993) and Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996). All interviewees were also asked for permission to record the dialogue.

In addition, secondary data were used through the study. Secondary research was undertaken in the form of a literature review of key theories and current related research. This took the form of researching books, journals, newspaper articles, online journals and the Internet. This was essential in developing awareness of the current state of knowledge on the subject and how the proposed research would add to what is already known (Gill & Johnson, 1991).

Findings and Discussions

The analysis of the data confirms that the Hajj is a unique event which takes place once a year. The individual pilgrims enjoy a wealth of experiences during their stay in Makkah and Madinah. Because the Hajj is such a large and long-standing event which takes place over a six day period, the Saudi Hajj ministry is greatly challenged to overcome the difficulties faced by the arrival of around 2.5 million people every year. Because the Hajj is such a unique moment for Muslims, the main purpose of the research was to analyse the experience of Hajj for individual participants travelling from the USA.

It was very difficult to capture data from Muslims living in Victorville, Claremont & Riverside, Southern California, USA. The pilgrim subjects were reluctant to share information, due to their complex political situation after 9/11. The relationship between Muslims and government in the USA has declined over the last decade. Therefore, the researchers needed to provide very clear assurances that the survey was being carried out to analyse facilities offered to pilgrims during the Hajj journey. The research was not carried out for the USA government or any other authority.

The analysis indicates that many people from the sample had not travelled to Makkah for Hajj from the USA over the last few decades. The ones who have are older Muslims and sheiks (leaders) or Imams

Table 1: Consumption of Travel

Please rate the level of services offered and provided by	High /Very Good / Excellent	Good / Happy	Bad / Low
The agent who booked the trip to Makkah?	30%	50%	20%
The agent on arrival at the Makkah airport?	20%	60%	20%

(prayer leaders in a Mosque). However, sufficient numbers were achieved to develop the findings presented in this paper.

Table 1 illustrates findings regarding the consumption of travel services, in particular, the level of services offered by the agents during their pilgrimage journey. The information in the table clearly notes that pilgrims who have travelled from Victorville, Claremont & Riverside, Southern California, USA are happy with their travel agents and the standard of package provided by the Hajj tour operators. The table indicates that 80% of pilgrims are happy with the overall services offered by the travel agent for the duration of the Hajj journey. Only 20% thought the services provided were bad or below standards.

Table 2 illustrates that besides Haram (the Islamic law prescribing that people must undertake Hajj), the main motive for travel for 93% of pilgrims was for religious / spiritual reasons. This emphasises the importance of understanding the overall view of the individual traveller to Hajj and the Holy Places in Saudi Arabia. These sites have a sacred quality in the world of Islam and this act of pilgrimage is a defining moment in the life of pilgrims. One of the major reasons why a Muslim goes on pilgrimage is to pray in the holiest mosques - such as in Makkah and Madinah and Jerusalem. The reward rises exponentially if the person offers Salat (the ritual prayer of Muslims, performed five times daily) in Makkah (Masjid-e-haram), Madinah (Masid-e-nabawi) and Jerusalem (Masjid-e-Aqsa). The main purpose of visiting these sites is for pilgrimage and to understand the act of pilgrimage, it is important to appreciate the visitor's motivation for visiting the pilgrimage sites. From a Muslim's point of view, pilgrims find love and pleasure, they enhance their knowledge and dedicate themselves to God.

Table 2: Besides Haram, What is the Motive for Visiting Religious Places for Hajj or Umrah?

For religious/spiritual reasons	93%
Because of the architecture	0%
Because of historical / cultural associations	7%

The visitation to mosques and historical sites in Makkah and Madinah, in particular, by pilgrims is due to the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUM) prayed in these places during his lifetime. After his migration to Madinah, he built his Mosque (Masjid –e-Nabvi), which became the centre and Capital of the Islamic State and the centre of command for the armies of conquest. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUM) had earlier built the first mosque in the history of Islam, which is known as Quba Mosque, laying down its foundation stone during his stay there before arriving to Madinah. The Quba Mosque is about 3 miles away from the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid –e-Nabvi). In a Hadith Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUM) states that visiting Quba Mosque and offering 2 rakats of nawafil prayer is equal in blessings and reward to one Umrah. This pilgrimage follows the sunnah of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUM) and undertaking this practice is an emulation of the Prophet. Therefore, performing salaah prayer at the various religious sites is

Box 1: Individual Lasting Memory of Hajj

The entire experience was moving in every way

Seeing the Haram (Kabba)

Arafat standing (dua) at Maghrib the leaving to Musdulifa

The Kaaba/ Prophet grave

First time seeing Kabah, Felt really peace full and comforting.

Very bad transportation

Box 2: Individual Spiritual Journey of Hajj

Hardship/Sweetness/Love

Unity Equality & Love

Spirituality/people touched so spiritually they cry

I felt the presence of god and the uplifting spiritual desire to be closer to god

I have been praying in the direction of the haram my whole life and my father passed away without seeing it.

Table 3: Experience of Logistical Information and Local shopping of Pilgrims

For each statement below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
The printed information produced by the Ministry of Hajj is well produced	18%	64%	18%	0%	0%
The display information by the Ministry of Hajj is easy to understand	22%	66%	11%	0%	0%
The staff/guides are helpful	9%	73%	9%	0%	9%
The cafes offer good quality food and drink	7%	57%	21%	0%	14%
The shops offer value for money	18%	27%	45%	9%	0%
This religious place is too commercial	36%	45%	18%	0%	0%
The visit was worth the cost of the donation	11%	78%	11%	0%	0%
I am glad I visited this religious place	69%	31%	0%	0%	0%

one of the fundamental pilgrimage practices in visiting the religious sites in Makkah and Madinah.

Table 3 discuss the issues that are faced by pilgrims during their journey to Makkah. Research indicates that most pilgrims are satisfied with the facilities and travel arrangement provided by the travel agents. The table highlights that pilgrims are unhappy with the service offered by the local shop keepers and feel that shops do not offer value for money. While 100% of respondents are happy to have visited the site, there is much room for improvement in many areas, in particular, respondents are dissatisfied with the level of commercialisation, and other issues such as displayed information (it must be noted that many of the pilgrimages which formed these views were a number

of years ago, therefore, it would be very useful to repeat this research with a range of recent pilgrims).

Box 1 and 2 illustrate that pilgrims had moving and unique experiences. The Hajj has unique spiritual aspects, which bring together people from every part of the world, such an immense diversity of human beings. These visitors are from vastly different cultures and languages, yet, they form one community and perform the same acts of faith all devoted to the worship of their single creator. This point comes out very clear in the findings presented in Table 4, which suggests that the Hajj is not a tourist phenomenon for pilgrims, it is the journey of a lifetime for the individual pilgrim who visits Makkah and performs the prescribed rituals and prayers.

Table 4: : Pilgrimage Experience

For each statement below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
I felt out of place while walking around	42%	16%	33%	0%	8%
I felt I was in a haven from everyday life	27%	42%	18%	0%	9%
I felt a strong religious/spiritual sense of place	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%
The architecture was awe-inspiring	50%	40%	0%	0%	10%
I experienced a real sense of a historical place	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
I had an uplifting religious/spiritual experience	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
I feel better in myself because of the visit	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
I felt 'humbled' while walking around	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

Table 4 provides clear experiential evidence of the journey to Makkah and Madinah, undertaken for one reason - to follow the footsteps of the beloved prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Therefore, one of the major reasons why a Muslim goes on pilgrimage is to pray in the holist mosques and the reward rises exponentially if the person offers Salat in Makkah (Masjid-e-haram), Madinah (Masid-e-nabawi) and Jerusalem (Masjid-e-Aqsa).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss, through research, why the Hajj is a fundamental part of the Muslim faith. Therefore, Hajj is not a tourist phenomenon. Instead, it is part of the Islamic faith for Muslim to perform the Hajj as stated in the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths. It is not like any other pilgrimage site in the world, where people go as both pilgrims and tourists. The people who go on Hajj feel unanimous in the view that nothing can quite prepare them for the sheer beauty of the experience and the overwhelming feeling of humility that overcomes them during the Hajj. It is clear from the above research that the Hajj is a very important element of the individual Muslim's faith. Those who perform the Hajj are not tourists, they are individuals who are carrying out religious acts and showing great humility and devotion during their pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah is a unique spiritual experience, which brings together people from every part of the world from vastly different backgrounds to form one community performing the same faith and all devoted to the worship of their single creator.

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